DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 465 737 SP 040 889

AUTHOR McFarland, Allison J.
TITLE Altering the Evaluation Process of Interscholastic Coaches Based on Alternative Classroom Teacher Appraisal Methods.
PUB DATE 2001-07-00
NOTE 19p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Alternative Assessment; *Athletic Coaches; Educational Research; Evaluation Methods; *Extramural Athletics; High Schools; Principals; *Teacher Evaluation

ABSTRACT

Regardless of whose primary responsibility it is to direct the activities of a school's athletic department, if there is trouble, it becomes the responsibility of the school administrator. Many problems emanating from the coaching staff can be avoided or minimized by utilizing current educational philosophies used for classroom teacher appraisal. Like classroom teachers, coaches must set goals, maintain the team, handle conflict, and teach skills. A coach's job, although more visible than that of a classroom teacher, is fundamentally that of a teacher. Based on this premise, application of educational research regarding supervision and evaluation of the classroom teacher makes a natural crossover to the athletic field. In its process, evaluating a coach should be no different than evaluating a classroom teacher. From a practical perspective, the processes used to evaluate a coach may prove to be more crucial than those used with contracted teachers. While administrators may not be familiar with all the intricacies of the sport of wrestling, for example, their knowledge of educational leadership and curriculum supervision can provide a strong foundation upon which to build a relationship with the coaches. (Contains 20 references.) (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 465 737

Altering the Evaluation Process of Interscholastic Coaches Based on Alternative Classroom Teacher Appraisal Methods

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Allison J. McFarland

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- ☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- • Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Date Submitted: July 26, 2001

SP040889

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Altering the Evaluation Process of Interscholastic Coaches Based on Alternative Classroom Teacher Appraisal Methods

Abstract

At the moment, evaluation of your interscholastic coaches may seem the farthest thing from your mind. You have more pressing issues that require your attention including curriculum and teacher supervision, facility renovations, student needs, and financial worries. After all, you assume that your athletic director will handle all issues pertaining to sport. Regardless of whose primary responsibility it is to direct the actvities of the athletic department, if there is trouble, it will become your responsibility.

The good news is that many storms eminating from your coaching staff can be avoided or minimized through utilization of current educational philosophies used for classroom teacher appraisal. Like classroom teachers, coaches must set goals, maintain the team, handle conflict, and teach skills. A coach's job description, although more visible than their classroom counterparts, is fundamentally that of a teacher. Based on this premise, application of educational research regarding supervision and evaluation of the classroom teacher makes a natural crossover to the athletic field. In its process, evaluating a coach should be no different than evaluating a classroom teacher. From a practical perspective, the processes used to evaluate a coach may prove to be more crucial than those you use with your contracted teachers. You may not be familiar with all the intricacies of the sport of wrestling, but your knowledge of educational leadership and curriculum supervision can provide a strong foundation on which to build a relationship with your coaches.

Altering the Process of Evaluating High School Coaches Based on Alternative Classroom Teacher Appraisal Methods

As a school administrator, you have successfully prepared documentation for national accreditation status; negotiated a faculty contract for the upcoming year; finalized details for the new school addition bond issue; and hired two new teachers with whom the students are happy. Your curriculum is in order and your teachers are content. No sooner have you uttered that sigh of satisfaction, than the phone rings. It's an angry parent who wants to vent frustration towards your boy's basketball coach. He indicates that as the representative spokesperson for a group of concerned parents, he wishes to discuss the removal of this coach from his position. After all, the team hasn't had a winning season in five years and the boys are saying that practices are a waste of time.

You may be wondering why this parent chose to interrupt one of your few moments of peace to talk about your athletic program. Unfortunately, this is all too common. According to Sabock (1985), the three most potentially explosive issues with which school administrators must deal are (1) professional negotiations, (2) construction of new buildings, and (3) coaches and athletic teams. Sabock continued by suggesting that because of the tremendous interest in high school sports, school officials are more apt to be approached by adults in their community over matters concerning sport teams and coaches than any other aspect of the educational program. In many cases, the previous year's achievements are forgotten in the face of controversy surrounding one of your athletic coaches.

As a practitioner trained in educational theory and administration, what contribution can you make to minimize conflict surrounding coaches within your athletic program? Regardless of your level of sport experience and interest, it is important for you to remember that coaches are teachers. Their classroom may be a playing field, court, or oval track, but their evaluation should be handled in a manner consistent with those teachers who speak from behind a desk.

Confusion Among the Ranks

"If a man does not know what port he steering for, no wind is favorable to him."

Seneca

It was recognized that coaches enter their profession well aware of, and prepared to deal with the pressures involved in influencing and shaping the lives of young people (Maltozo, 1981; Hixson, 1967; Stillwell, 1979; True, 1987). It was indicated however, that the unexpected and most acute frustrations with which coaches must deal stem from vague and often unrealistic expectation of the public, school board, and school administration (Hoch, 1999; Leland, 1988; Adams, 1974; Hafner, 1962). Additionally, much confusion and tension is created between the coach and administration when these expectations are not clearly communicated (Bookman, 1999; Adams, 1974). Lists of criteria which athletic administrators felt to be necessary for effective coaching were numerous and often repetitive.

Stier (1986) divided the coaching qualities deemed important by athletic and school administrators into four different categories: 1. technical aspects, 2. conceptual skills, 3. interpersonal relationship skills, and 4. dedication to their jobs. Included in these four categories, Stier recorded these "necessary" criteria: (a) awareness of the

entire athletic department, not just one's own individual sport, (b) sensitivity to the overall goals and objectives of the athletic department, (c) willingness to avoid thinking only in terms of "me", (d) willingness to work toward the agreed upon goals regardless of the facilities available, (e) ability to strive for success while being aware of when to stop pushing, (f) willingness to respect and follow the chain of command, (g) loyalty to the staff, program and students, (h) competency as a teacher, advisor and coach, (i) ability and willingness to coach more than one sport, (j) qualifications to teach more than one subject, (k) possession of an understanding spouse and family, (l) ability to relate and deal with the public effectively, (m) involvement in, and support of other areas of the school, (n) ability and willingness to observe and listen to what others are communicating, (o) ability to learn from experiences, (p) ability to demonstrate humility, (q) willingness to give praise and credit when due, (r) ability to refrain from being a "cry baby", (s) willingness to pay one's dues within the school system, and (t) ability to be adaptable to a change in goals, administration, and positions.

McKinney (1970) added that a good coach: (a) is capable of helping each student achieve his/her athletic potential, (b) keeps abreast of technical and scientific advances, (c) is capable of adjusting his game to fit his player's intellectual and neuromuscular skill levels, (d) applies scientific principles of conditioning on a 12 month basis, (e) emphasizes education first and athletics second, (f) hates to lose, but will not try to win at any cost, (g) teaches long-range values of athletic participation, (h) does not let his ego distort his professional motives for being a coach, (i) plays up his team to the communication media, (j) gives ample credit to faculty and student assistants at all times,

(k) is respected by students, athletes and faculty, and (l) is as dedicated to academic teaching to coaching.

These lists of coaching criteria are not only overwhelming, but very confusing and misleading to a coach who must guess which of these criteria will be used to evaluate his/her performance (Jones, 1990). Although a coach serves in the capacity of teacher, it is evident that expectations are often more diverse and excessive. It is no wonder the coach is often unprepared for handling his/her job expectations.

In a recent study, McFarland (1989) noted that when questioned as to their perceptions towards which criteria were actually being used in the final evaluation of a high school coach, responses from coaches and administrators yielded several overall significant differences. Without the apparent use of a formal evaluation tool, administrators who were surveyed ranked a coach's conduct during a game, classroom teaching ability, communication skills, and the coach's ability to motivate athletes significantly higher than did coaches as criteria thought to be used during a coaching evaluation. In contrast, coaches perceived that win-loss record and the coach's relationship with the evaluator were used more often as evaluation criteria than did their administrators.

A further comparison of this data (McFarland, 1989) indicated that significant differences were found between the means collected for varied criteria among small, medium, and large size schools. Conclusions can be made from this study that differences between interscholastic athletic and school administrators and their coaches in their perception as to which evaluation criteria are being used to do exist. Implications for

administrators include the need to review evaluative criteria with regard to expected outcomes, and to improve communication regarding these evaluation criteria.

Vanderswaag (1984) commented that "there are very few occupations that have less security than those involving coaching (p. 21)". Extensive lists of *essential* criteria for effective coaching, combined with the high level of interest in sports maintained by the general public creates an atmosphere in which school administrators must take a proactive approach. To minimize confusion and to counter questions, comments, and accusations from the community; a formal, progressive, and innovative approach must be taken in the evaluation of coaches. This process must be initiated and supported by the school administrator.

Coaches as Teachers

"If you want to get the best out of a man you must look for the best that is in him."

Bernard Haldane

Today's coaches realize that despite the media and cultural emphasis on sport, the most important objective of sport participation is "athletes first, winning second." Sport education is an extension of the classroom. Goals of coaching programs such as the American Coaching Effectiveness Program and the Program for Athletic Coaches' Education reflect the major goals of modern education; helping students to become more self-reliant, responsible, self-disciplined, and capable (Nakamura, 1996). Nakamura continued by suggesting that,

> "Athletics is just one of many vehicles working together to help young people reach those potentials, and the coach is just one of the many drivers helping to fuel and guide each athlete to that end (p. 4)."

If we are to view and evaluate coaches through the same lens as we do classroom teachers, what constitutes coaching expertise? Ebel and Berg (1976) provided a list of instructional competencies that are demonstrated by effective/experienced teachers of sport skills. This list, although modified slightly to accommodate motor skill instruction, remains consistent with evaluation criteria used to evaluate classroom teachers. According to Ebel and Berg (1976), criteria for defining effective teaching of sport skills include: (1) Extent of the instructor's mastery of subject material, (2) instructor's ability to explain the subject, (3) magnitude to which students are encouraged to think, (4) fairness in evaluation methods, and (5) evidence of concern for students.

Coaches are leaders of young athletes. As a result they must plan, organize, direct, and coordinate the efforts of their teams. Like classroom teachers, coaches must set goals, maintain the team, handle conflict, and teach skills. A coach's job description, although more visible than their classroom counterparts, is fundamentally that of a teacher. Based on this premise, application of educational research regarding supervision and evaluation of the classroom teacher makes a natural crossover to the athletic field. In its process, evaluating a coach should be no different than evaluating a classroom teacher. From a practical perspective, the processes used to evaluate a coach may prove to be more crucial than those you use with your contracted teachers.

Lessons from the Classroom

"No one can whistle a symphony. It takes an orchestra to play."

Halford Luccock

Poole (1994) indicated that supervision in public schools is in "a state of transition from a traditional view of supervision as a hierarchical construct, to a more democratic, or horizontal notion of supervision (p. 284)." A shift to a more collegial, reflective model of teacher evaluation has become more evident in the schools of the 90s, with a primary goal of the teacher becoming more self-directed and analytical (Nolan et al., 1993). Nolan et al, (1993, p. 54) suggested that the following five commonalities are shared in shaping the current methods of teacher appraisal:

1. The development of a collegial relationship in which the teacher feels safe and supported
2. Teacher control over the products of supervision
3. Continuity in the supervisory process over time
4. Focused, descriptive records of actual teaching and learning events as the basis for reflection; and
5. Reflection by both the teacher and supervisor as the heart of the process of post-conferencing.

Additional data (Kilbourn, 1982; Robinson, 1984; Nolan and Hillkirk, 1991) suggested that updated and effective teacher supervision be enhanced by "frequent teacher-supervisor interactions over extended periods of time, lasting anywhere from three months to two academic years (Nolan et al., 1993, p. 55)."

In the modern appraisal model, teachers retain final control over decisions about their teaching practices; supporting the notion that trying to force a teacher to attend to issues that are important only to the supervisor is ineffective. In a 1993 article, Rooney stated,

"What has changed in our system – more than anything else – is the concept of the principal. I am no longer the one responsible for a teacher's behavior. Teachers are responsible for their own professional growth – both individually and as a group… by acknowledging this premise, we allowed the power of action to pass to the professional staff (p. 42)."

This transfer of power from a sole supervisor to individuals and groups is also made evident in educational research through the use of peer appraisals. Rooney (1993) stated, "Peer coaching, long accepted as an effective way for teachers to improve instruction, is becoming the norm (p. 42)." Schools who utilize methods of peer appraisals also report that teachers gain more from observing a peer than from being observed (Dyer, 2001; Walen & DeRose, 1993).

From Hallways to Helmets

"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."

Henry Ford

If you are like most supervisors, when you hear the words "performance appraisal", you probably don't shout for joy. Many managers of both corporate and educational organizations often say that appraisals are "a lot of work, without a lot of value" (Dyer, 2001). It is important to remember that it doesn't have to be that way. Appraisals can be a valuable tool for managers and employees if they are conducted, used, and structured properly (McCarthy, 2000).

The tremendous level of public interest in school athletics; continued emphasis upon winning championships and increasing gate receipts; proselytizing of college and

professional athletics; and the demand for larger and larger spectator facilities have all contributed to the creation of a situation in which historically, a coach must often produce a successful team or lose his/her job (Degroot, 1950; Hoch, 1999; Leland, 1988). Unfortunately, acceptance of this philosophy appears to support Vanderswaag's comment (1984) that "there are very few occupations that have less security than those involving coaching (p. 21)".

In schools that are implementing new guidelines for evaluation, principals confer with teachers before and after evaluations; hold pre-conferences so teachers can brief them about classroom details, lesson plans, and provide contextual information to help them more accurately conduct evaluations. Unlike their classroom counterparts, few coaches have the luxury of operating under such a formalized evaluation system. In his 1988 article, Leland asked,

> "How many coaches have been shocked by a dismissal? Conversely, how many coaches have we known who have been successful and never received formal feedback from the institution they serve? Much of the evaluation in athletics is in the form: 'Nice job', 'tough loss'. Comments such as these often are the only feedback coaches receive (p. 21)."

The fear of losing one's job can be a major contributor to misunderstandings that occur between the evaluator and the coach. If the coach believes that the sole purpose of the evaluation is to find evidence for dismissal, cooperation will be virtually nonexistent, and the ultimate goal of evaluation will have been lost. Jensen (1988) added,

"Evaluation for the purpose of detecting weakness serves little purpose unless the information is utilized to cause results. The ultimate reason for evaluation is improvement. Without the intent to improve, why evaluate (p.306)?"

With the growth of participation in youth sport, community recreation leagues, and amateur and recreational sport involvement, increasing attention will be paid to the public school sport program and the actions of its coaches. It is no longer feasible or practical to function under a casual, informal coaches evaluation system. It is time to modify archaic and ineffective informal systems and to look towards more innovative techniques for assessing performance. Educational research has provided administrators with data to support the beneficial use of two alternative appraisal methods: Self-reflection and Peer Appraisal.

Coach to Coach

"I saw the angel in the marble and I just chiseled until I set him free"

Michelagelo

Coaches provide a high visible and stress-filled service for their school district with very little positive feedback. A traditional evaluation process that utilizes a single building administrator or athletic director may only offer minimal insights into the unique pressures and time constraints under which a coach must perform, and even less positive feedback for the coach. Although the traditional method is still widely used, alternative approaches which utilize peer appraisal have been successful in imp ving teaching methods and job satisfaction in the classroom (Antonioni, 2000; Robinson, 1984; Black, 1993; Walen & DeRose, 1993; Costa & Kallick, 1993), and promise equal results when applied to the sport realm.

When utilizing peer appraisal with coaches, it is important to try to match coaches who administer similar sports. The pressures of coaching a highly visible football, volleyball or basketball team creates unique demands on a coach which might not be evident in less visible sports such as golf, cross country, or tennis. Although all coaches are equally teachers, the pressure and visibility of certain sports lends itself to higher expectations, more community and parental stressors, and increased demands on personal time. Utilizing same sport coaches as peer mentors can be achieved by releasing head coaches from their practice duties on days in which they have arranged to observe and interact with a colleague. This exchange can happen among schools in a large district, or between two different schools in smaller school districts. This method of alternative appraisal requires planning, organization, and district approval and support.

Utilizing other coaches as participants in the peer appraisal process will provide building administrators with insights they might not otherwise receive. Additionally benefits are also afforded to the participants of this method of assessment. According to observations by Walen and DeRose (1993), "every member said that he or she gained more from observing a peer than from being observed (p. 45)."

Walen and DeRose (1993) agreed that there are prerequisites that must be in place for an alternative, peer appraisal process to be effective. Keeping in mind that coaches are fundamentally teachers, the authors stated,

> "...Support from district and building administrators is critical. Supportive administrators recognize that experienced teachers, through their daily contact with students, provide effective role models for one another. Administrators who support

teachers are aware of the importance of empowerment and see themselves as facilitators to that end (p. 48)."

Coaches are competitive individuals who want to put their best foot forward. They enjoy working with young people, and feel the call to teach. Like their classroom counterparts, in a collegial and supportive atmosphere, coaches will improve professionally when given the opportunity.

One on One

"The greatest freedom man has is the freedom to discipline himself"

Bernard M. Baruch

According to Black (1993), teachers aren't accepting the "one judge, one jury (p. 39)" evaluation from principals any longer. Increasingly, Principals are seeing themselves as "mentors, coaches, and helpers rather than the sole authority on a teacher's effectiveness (Black, 1993, p. 42)." In cases in which reflective practices were utilized in the appraisal process, the supervisor and teacher worked at developing a collegial relationship marked by "deference, reciprocity, trust, and respect for the contributions that each partner could make to the process (Nolan et al, 1993, p. 54)."

Ownership is an important motivator. Most coaches are well aware of their strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Often high profile coaches are hesitant to discuss areas of need for fear of having that information used at a later date for the purpose of dismissal or discipline. Coaches, like classroom teachers, should feel free to express their feelings honestly without fear of ridicule or rebuke. They should also feel free to fail occasionally without punishment. Without a feeling of emotional safety, coaches will find it difficult to enthusiastically explore new challenges. If asked to engage in

reflective practices for the purpose of improving personal and professional performance, most coaches in "safe" environments will readily agree.

Implementation of self appraisal as a portion of a coach's appraisal could take the form of a pre-season meeting in which the coach and building or athletic administrator discuss the upcoming season, highlighting strengths and weaknesses, as well as the needs of the team, school, administration, and coach. During this meeting, the coach should be encouraged to articulate his/her goals in the form of clearly stated objectives that could be measured at the completion of the season. Although they conduct similar tasks to that of a classroom teacher, coaches perform their job in a very public arena. This constant pressure to publicly perform often causes coaches to become defensive and wary of those offering advice. When given the opportunity in a non-threatening atmosphere, coaches will appreciate the opportunity to discuss the bigger picture with a supportive administrator. In support of this observation, Grimmet and Creehan (1990) warn building administrators that at least two conditions are essential for helping teachers to engage in productive reflection which include,

> "(1) A collegial and supportive relationship, and (2) allowing the teacher to name the problems to address during conferences and then exploring those problems collaboratively with the teacher (Nolan et al, 1993, p. 54)."

The Final Buzzer

"All of us do not have equal talents, but all of us should have an equal opportunity to develop our talents."

John F. Kennedy

Using educational research to alter the traditional process of evaluating high school coaches can yield positive results for all involved. Coaches who are utilized as peer appraisers will provide essential insights into the coaching world, as well as benefit from the observation of their peers. Classroom teachers will value the increased expectations and importance placed on assessing the behaviors and practices of coaches within their school district. Coaches undergoing performance appraisal will be allowed and encouraged to improve instructional effectiveness while becoming more reflective about their coaching/teaching style. Building administrators will gain more insight into the problems and goals of their athletic staff. This insight will allow for more effective communication with coaches, teachers, school board members, athletes and parents. Hoch (1999) concluded his comments on the evaluation of coaches by stating,

> "If properly handled, a formal, annual coaching evaluation, while it does take a great deal of time and effort, can be extremely beneficial. The process should result in a committed, improved coaching staff; the ultimate beneficiaries of which are the student-athletes… (p. 38)."

With regards to the entire evaluation process, Jensen (1988) summarized an administrator's responsibility by offering the following advice: "Hire carefully, dismiss sparingly, and cultivate to the maximum the talents and abilities of those who are employed (p.323)."

Bibliography

Antonioni, D. (2000). 360-degree feedback for a competitive edge. Industrial Management, 42(3), 6-10.

Black, S. (1993). How teachers are reshaping evaluation procedures. Educational Leadership, 51(2), 38-42.

Bookman, R. (1999). Tols for cultivating constructive feedback. Association Management, 51(2), 72-75.

Costa, A. & Kallick, B. (1993), Through the lens of a critical friend. Educational Leadership, 51(2), 49-51.

Dyer, K. (2001). The power of 360-degree feedback. Educational Leadership, 58(5), 35-38.

Garmston, R., Linder, C., Whitaker, J. (1993). Reflections on cognitive coaching. Educational Leadership, 51(2), 57-61.

Gerdy, J. (1995). Blow the whistle on athletic coaches. Trusteeship, 3 (6), 22-26.

Silverman, S. (1991). Research on teaching in physical education. Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 62(4), 352-364.

Hoch, D. (1999). Appraise worthy. Athletic Business, 23(4), 36-37.

Kilbourn, B. (1982). Linda: A case study in clinical supervision. Canadian Journal of Education, 3(1), 1-24.

Leland, T. (1988). Evaluating coaches – formalizing the process. Journal of Physical Education Recreation and Dance, 59(9), 21-23.

McCarthy, J. (2000). Performance evaluation. Journal of Property Management, 65(5), 22-25.

Nolan, J. F., & Hillkirk, R. (1991). The effects of a reflective coaching project for veteran teachers. Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 7(1), 62-76.

Nolan, J., Hawkes., Francis, P. (1993). Case studies: Windows onto clinical supervision. Educational Leadership, 51(2), 52-56.

Robinson, J. (1984). A second pair of eyes: A case study of a supervisor's view of clinical supervision. In Case Studies in Clinical Supervision, edited by W.J. Smyth. Victoria, Australia: Deakin University Press.

Rooney, J. (1993). Teacher evaluation: No more 'super'vision. Educational Leadership, 51(2), 43-44.

Schempp, P.G. (1997). Developing expertise in teaching and coaching. Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 68(2), 29.

Stobbe, C. (1993). Professional partnerships. Educational Leadership, 51(2), 40-41.

Sutliff, M & Solomon, A.H. (1993). A comparison of the perceived teaching effectiveness of full-time faculty and coaches teaching physical education activity classes. Physical Educator, 50(3), 145-150.

Walen, E. & DeRose M. (1993). The power of peer appraisals. Educational Leadership, 51(2), 45-48.